

### **Complaints Policy and Procedure**

This policy is intended to cover any complaints raised about the conduct of the Society or actions taken on behalf of the Society that would be serious enough to be counted either in breach of the constitution of the Society, or contrary to its charitable objectives. The same procedure will be used should information or allegations come to light of personal misconduct or seriously anti-social behaviour on the part of any individual member or representative of the Society such as could reasonably be considered to bring the Society into disrepute.

Anyone who wishes to raise a complaint is advised in the first instance to communicate their concerns to the President, Vice-Presidents, or Executive Officers. Concurrently, it is recognized that such complaints may come to the attention of, or properly be raised with, any Trustees, officers or representatives of the Society, via various routes, and that all Trustees have a duty to act diligently in respect of any relevant matters that come to their notice.

In the event of a complaint that appears, *prima facie*, to be serious enough to be dealt with in accordance with the policy, it should be referred to the President, or should the President not be available to one of the Vice-Presidents.

If the President and Vice-Presidents agree (if necessary, by a simple majority) that the issue merits further investigation, an ad hoc panel will be convened to be chaired by one of them, and with one or two other panel members, normally Trustees or suitable experts as appropriate.

That panel will be charged with evaluating the complaint, and making recommendations for any further action, which will be reported back to the President. Such recommendations may then be put into effect on the authority of the President and Vice-Presidents. Confidentiality will be maintained at all stages of the process of dealing with complaints, and information relating to the case should be shared on a need-to-know basis only. Nonetheless the fact of the investigation and its outcome must be reported to the Trustees at the next appropriate regular meeting. Any documentation relating to the complaint and its investigation must be kept secure.

The Society shall acknowledge receipt of any complaint raised without delay and conduct any subsequent investigation with maximum care and equal promptitude.

#### **Covering note**

No individual who is personally involved in a complaint shall take any part in the handling of the case. If the President or a Vice-President is involved in this way they shall be replaced in the procedures prescribed above by one or more Trustees, selected with regard both to seniority and to relevant experience. Should a complaint involve the officers and Trustees as a whole they must collectively decide how to proceed.